Linguistic Correlates of Proficiency (LCP)

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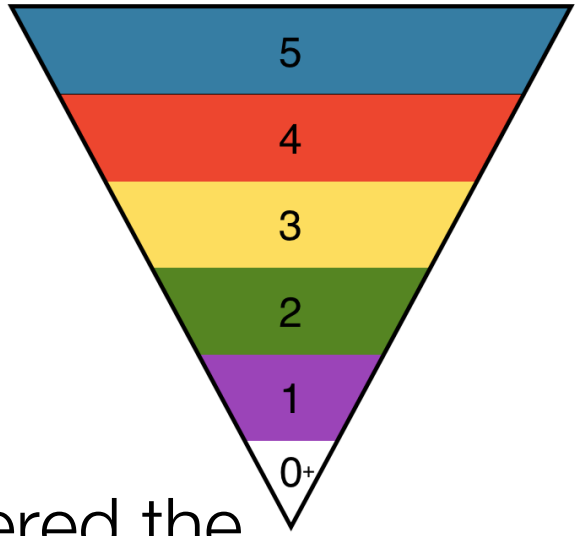
Background

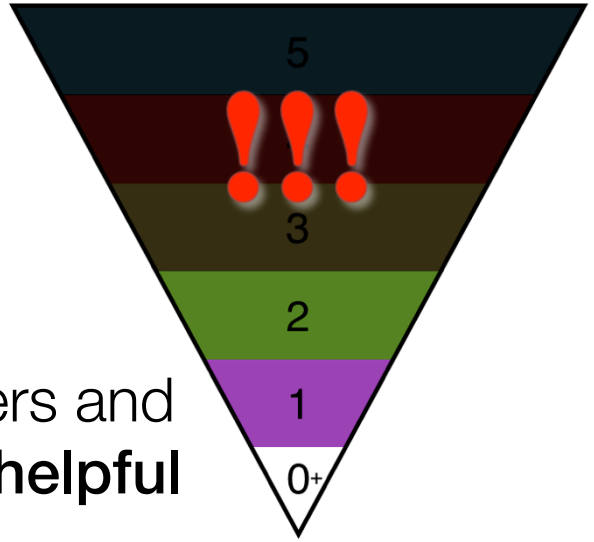
- Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale widely used in U.S.



- **ILR 3** (on a scale of 0–5) is considered the minimum acceptable level for professional proficiency in **less commonly taught languages** (LCTLs) (Brecht & Rivers, 2005)

- e.g., Russian, Chinese, Persian, Arabic, Korean

Motivation



- The majority of LCTL learners **do not go beyond ILR 2**, even after many years of study (Long, Gor & Jackson, 2012)
- While the ILR scale is attractive to end users and test administrators, these scales are **less helpful for learners and instructors**
- Few data exist as to the **appropriate linguistic competence for the different ILR levels**—especially at the advanced levels for LCTLs
- Practical need for **diagnostic** to add linguistic detail to ILR proficiency scores

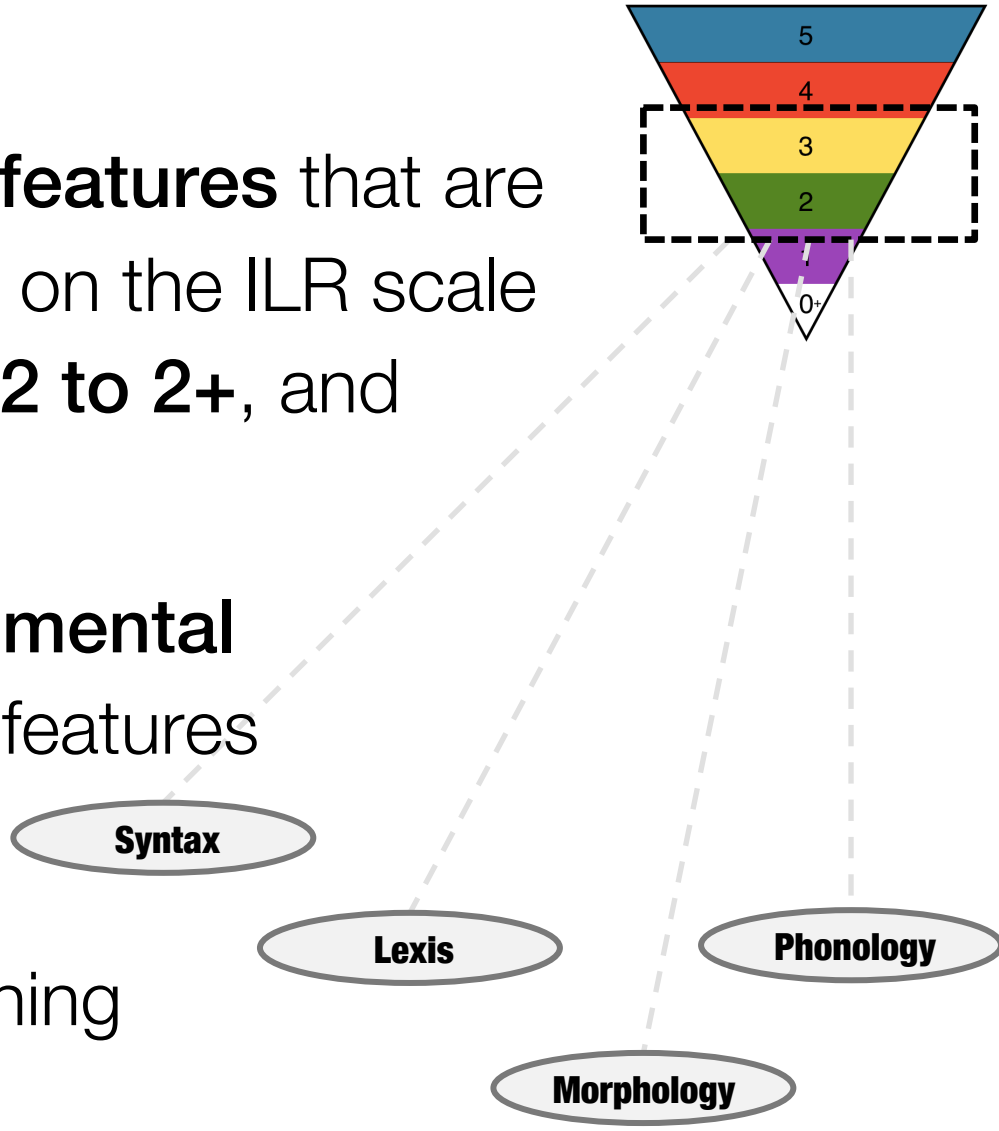
Longterm goals of LCP project

Primary:

- To **identify linguistic features** that are implicated in progress on the ILR scale (specifically, from **ILR 2 to 2+**, and from **ILR 2+ to 3**)
- To **establish developmental trajectories** for these features

Secondary:

- Improve learning/teaching



Construct

- The underlying construct is defined as **having knowledge in different linguistic domains** in terms of both **accuracy** and **automaticity**.

Phonology	Lexis
+Accuracy	+Accuracy
+Automaticity	+Automaticity

Morphology	Syntax
+Accuracy	+Accuracy
+Automaticity	+Automaticity

Measures

Set of tests for each language

Syntax
+Accuracy
+Automaticity

- **Receptive** Tasks
  - Syntactic accuracy: Grammaticality Judgment Task (GJT)

Test taker sees (or hears) a sentence:

"The researchers was running some tests."

Test taker decides if it is acceptable or not acceptable

  - Syntactic automaticity: Self-paced Reading task (SPR)

Measures

Syntax
+Accuracy
+Automaticity

Example: Self-paced Reading task (SPR)

Test taker sees:

___ _____ ____ _____ _____ _____.

- *Presses button to make next word appear*
- *Reaction times (RTs) recorded*
- *Slower RTs at errors indicate sensitivity to grammar*

Measures

Syntax
+Accuracy
+Automaticity

Set of tests for each language

- **Receptive** Tasks
  - Syntactic accuracy: Grammaticality Judgment Task (GJT)
  - Syntactic automaticity: Self-paced Reading task (SPR)

- Linguistic features selected on the basis of:
  - reviews of previous research
  - interviews with experienced teachers
  - interviews with advanced learners (OPI sample)
  - reviews of textbooks for advanced levels

- Languages:
  - Russian, Chinese, Persian

Research Questions

1. Which **linguistic features** of Russian, Chinese, and Persian correlate with ILR proficiency levels 2, 2+, and 3 on the ILR scale?

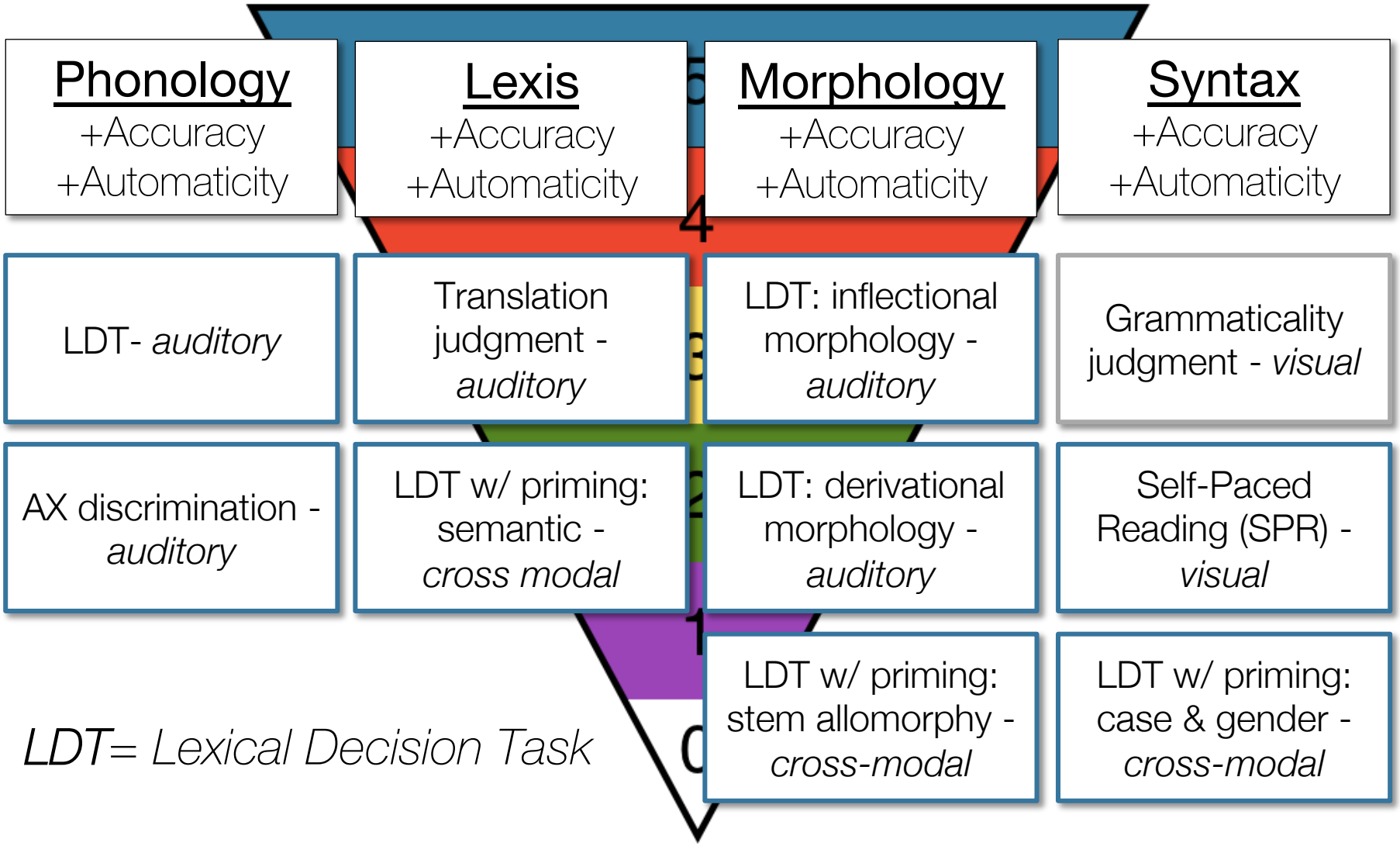
2. At what **level of control** do these linguistic features correlate with ILR proficiency levels 2, 2+, and 3 on the ILR scale?

(cf. Long, Gor & Jackson, 2012)

Procedure

- After initial screening, learners who were expected to score ILR 2 to 3+ were selected
- Participants took an official Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)
- Participants completed the LCP battery, delivered via remote DMDX (Forster & Forster, 2003)

Overview of Russian LCP tests



LDT= Lexical Decision Task

Russian

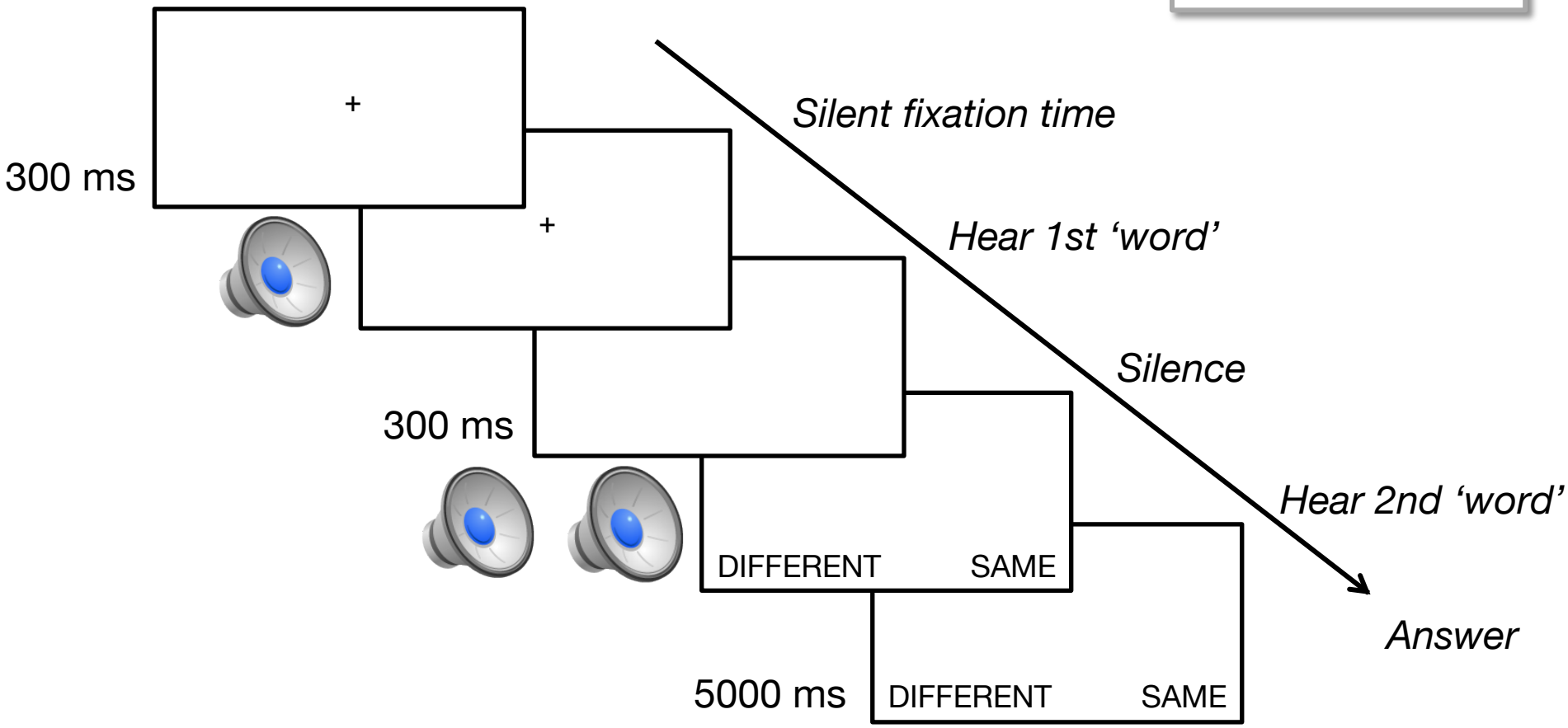
AX discrimination - *auditory*

- AX discrimination task (same-different)
- Measured response times to
  - Difficult vs. easy sounds
  - Frequent vs. infrequent sounds

	High probability	Low probability
Perceptually easy	/ni/	/mi/
Perceptually difficult	/mʲi/	/nʲi/

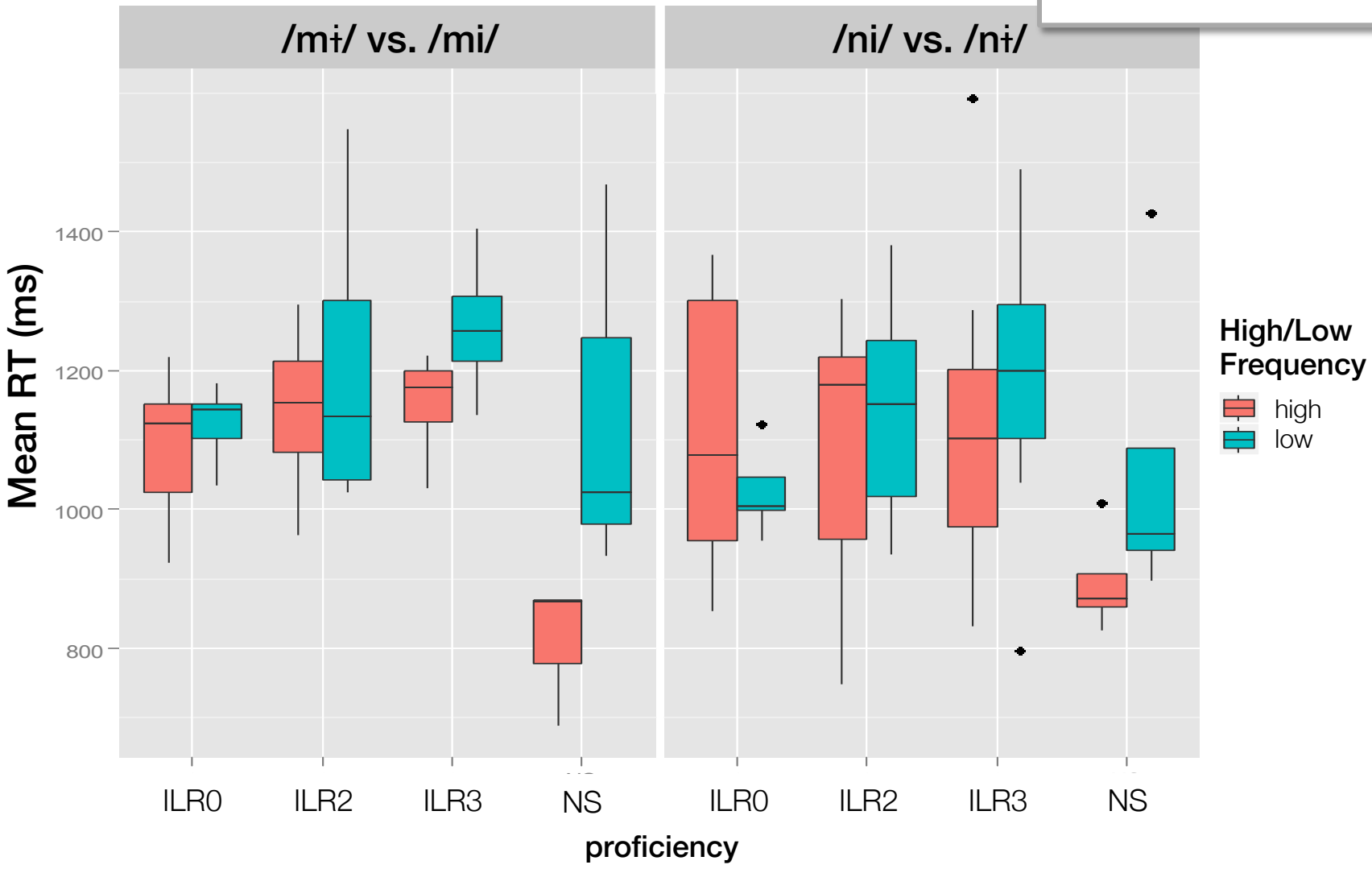
Russian

AX discrimination - *auditory*

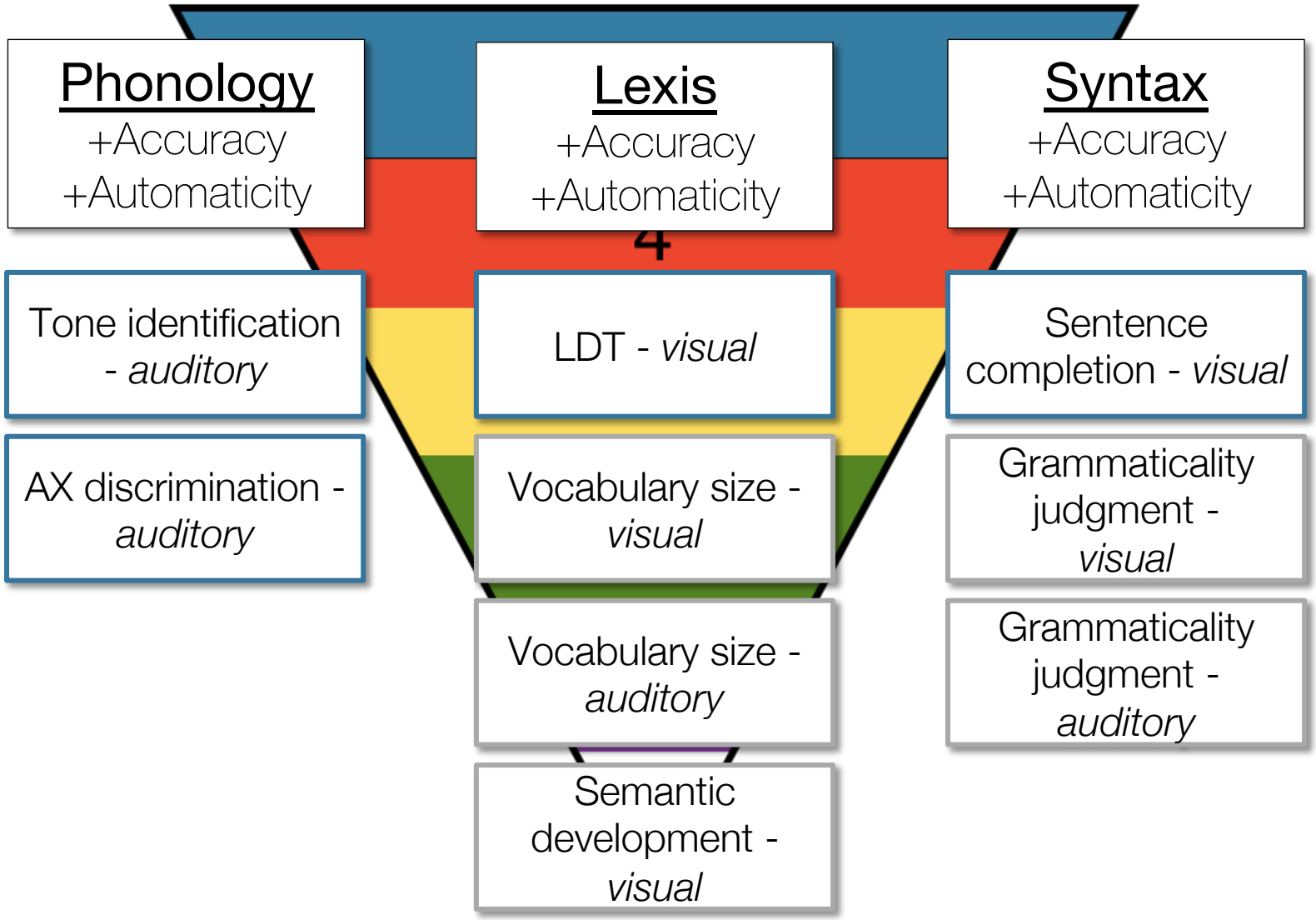


Russian

AX discrimination - *auditory*



Overview of Chinese LCP tests



Chinese

Vocabulary Size - *auditory*

- 100 multiple choice items
- 10 words each from 1000 item frequency bands starting at the 6000th most frequent word and ending with the 15,999th
- Example:

Test taker hears:

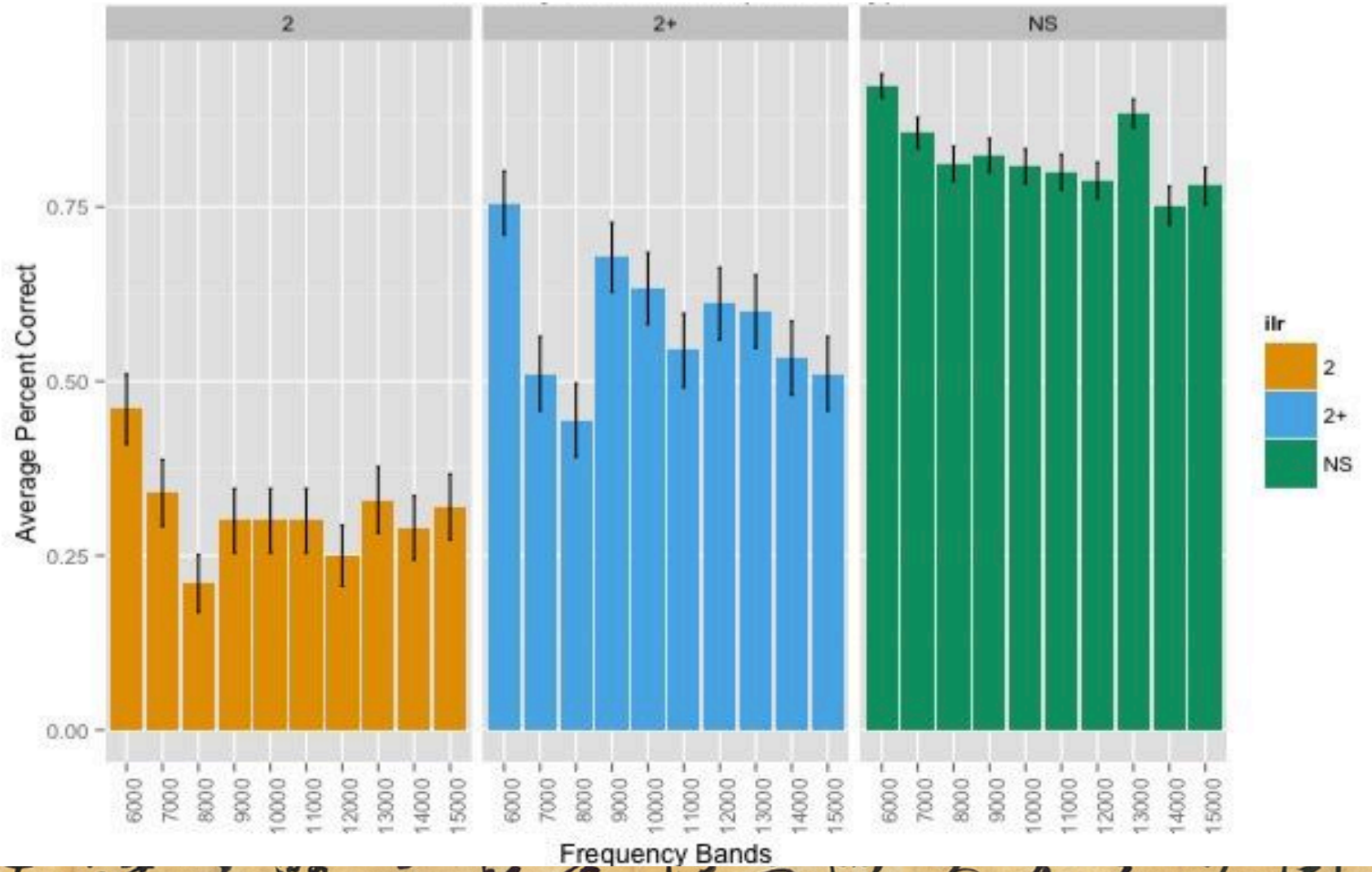
kāngkǎi (慷慨)

Four choices appear onscreen:

1. generous 2. indignant 3. touched 4. selfish

Chinese

Vocabulary Size - *auditory*



Chinese

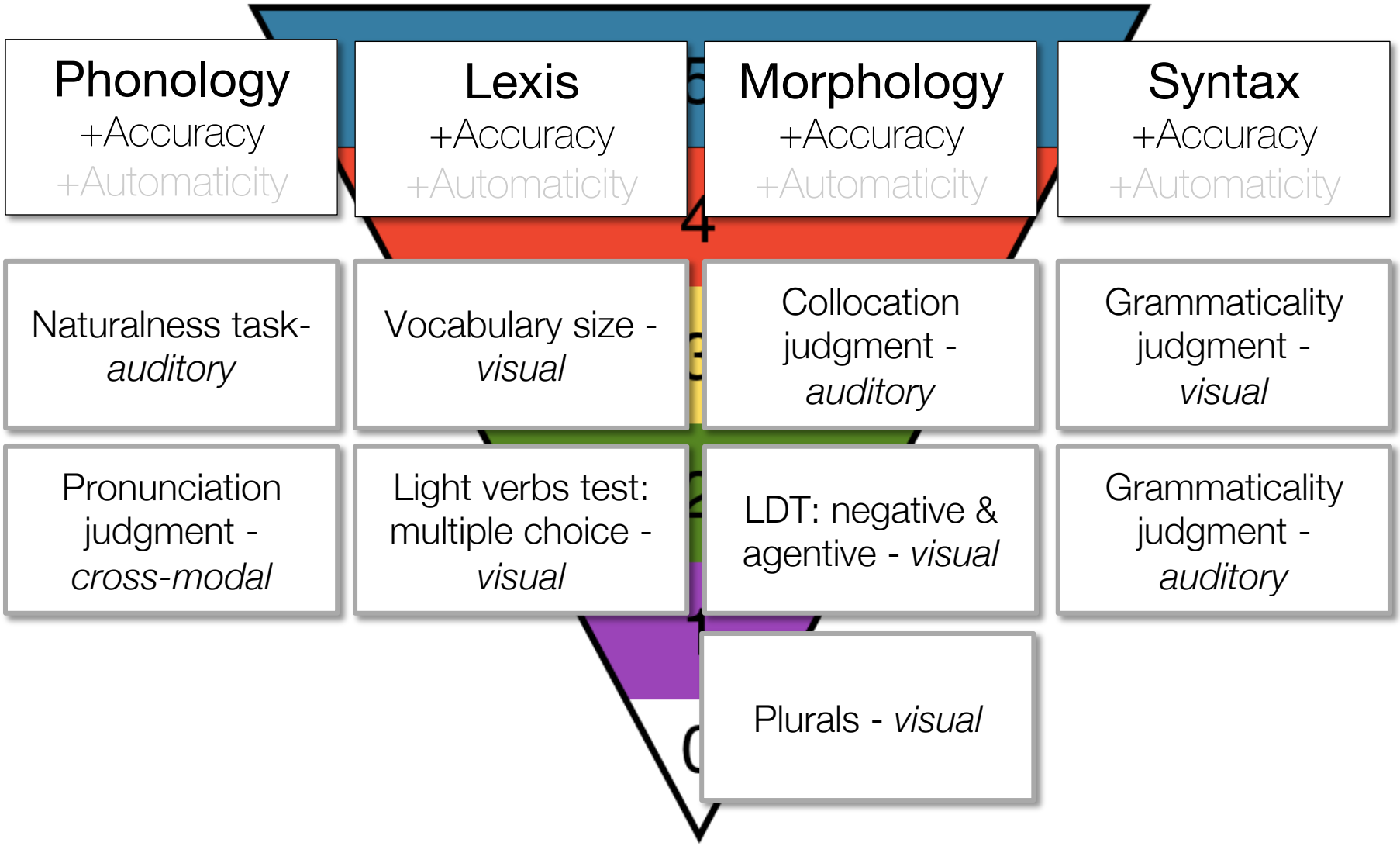
Vocabulary Size - *auditory*

ILR Level	Mean Vocab Size	sd	range
ILR 2	4,960	1,120	3,360-7,360
ILR 2+	9,279	1,140	7,040-12,080
NS	*13,119*	*800*	*11,999-14,719*

Limitations:

- Exploratory in nature (cf. Shen, 2009; Chao et al., 1967)
- Few L2 participants (n=24 total), especially ≥ ILR 3 (n=2)
- Item analysis needs to be done to improve test items
- Current format requires NS to understand English in order to answer accurately

Overview of Persian LCP tests



Persian

- Linguistic features and tasks: ten different receptive-based test tasks. For example:

  - Phonological knowledge: e.g., Persian Vowels and Liquids through a "Naturalness Task"

  - Lexical knowledge: e.g, Persian light verbs through a Multiple Choice (MC) task

  - Morphological knowledge: e.g., negatives and Agentives through Lexical Decision Task (LDT)

  - Syntactic knowledge: e.g., Accusative "Ra", subject-verb agreement through audio and visual GJTs.

Answer

1. Which linguistic features of Russian, Chinese, and Persian correlate with ILR proficiency levels 2, 2+, and 3 on the ILR scale?

2. At what level of control do these linguistic features correlate with ILR proficiency levels 2, 2+, and 3 on the ILR scale?

Stay tuned!

Limitations & Future Directions

- Find large numbers of ≥ ILR 3 proficiency LCTL learners
- Improve current batteries
- Replace tests that do not discriminate ILR levels
- Establish lists or relevant linguistic correlates
- Target additional LCTLs--Korean and Arabic
- Systematize selection of relevant features
- Find ways to compare results across languages
- Determine practical usefulness (or lack) of psycholinguistic batteries (e.g., speed training)

Спасибо!

谢谢!

با تشکراز شما !

Thank you!

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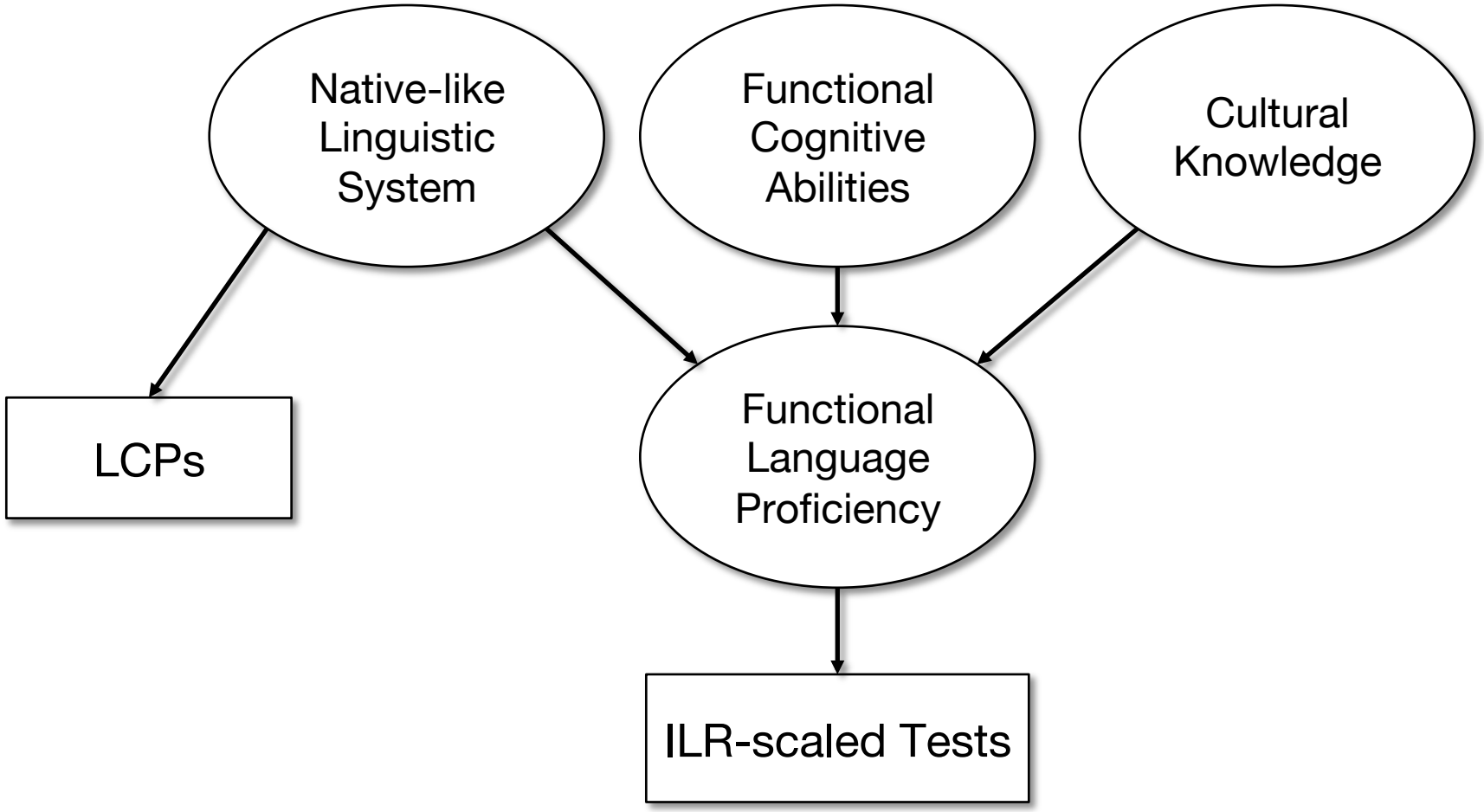
LCP relation to functional proficiency



A 'pre-theoretic' model of the link between LCP and functional proficiency

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